

1 CHAIRMAN JAMES: Mr. Webster Franklin?

2 MR. FRANKLIN: Madam Chairman, members of the  
3 commission, my name is Webster Franklin. I currently serve as  
4 executive director of the Tunica, Mississippi Convention and  
5 Visitors Bureau. I'm a lifelong native of the Mississippi Delta,  
6 which is the geographic region in which Tunica County is  
7 currently located.

8 The gaming industry arrived in Tunica in October 1992  
9 and before that the mechanization of the farming industry had  
10 displaced thousands and thousands of workers in our area. Those  
11 workers moved to the bigger cities throughout the country, into  
12 Memphis and Chicago, and basically up the Mississippi River.

13 Since the gaming industry's arrival in Tunica, over  
14 16,000 new jobs have been created in a community that only has  
15 9,000 residents. 16,000 jobs in a community with 9,000  
16 residents -- it's an amazing statistic and story. Our  
17 unemployment rate, which was 26.2 percent in January 1992, today  
18 is at 4.9 percent.

19 But I'm not here to tell you more statistics about  
20 Tunica. I'm here to talk about Ms. Rosie Barnes. Rosie is  
21 currently employed at the Treasure Town Inn, a local hotel in  
22 Tunica that is a spin-off industry of the gaming industry.

23 Rosie and her husband have lived in Tunica all their  
24 lives and six years ago they were on all Federal programs that  
25 were needed to live. Rosie and her husband have since, since her  
26 employment, have since bought a new truck for their family.

27 Rosie has also bought a trailer in the first two  
28 years of her employment within the hospitality industry. Since

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1 then, she has also purchased land for the price of \$10,000.  
2 Rosie Barnes is living the American dream.

3 When I asked Rosie what her goal was over the next  
4 five years, she told me, Webster, I'm going to build a house on  
5 that land that I bought with the opportunity that I have now.  
6 Rosie is, in fact, living the American dream and some 5,000  
7 others in Tunica County in the labor force are doing the same.

8 Rosie unfortunately can't be with us today because  
9 Rosie is at home at work, earning her money so she can build her  
10 home.

11 As my job at tourism in Tunica County, we now see  
12 over 50,000 visitors per day come to our area. I would like to  
13 personally invite each of you to come and see the things that  
14 you've heard so much about Tunica today from our country  
15 administrator, our mayor and others, to see firsthand the  
16 dramatic effect that the gaming industry has brought to our area.

17 Thank you for this opportunity.

18 CHAIRMAN JAMES: Thank you.

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